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iPads and Communication Apps: Making a Good Choice

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ATC

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This training is provided by the
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Webinar Goals

- Learn about what Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is and when it can be useful
- Learn about considerations for different types of AAC users
- Learn about selecting apps that will best fit individual users

What is Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)?

- In this context: use of electronic devices as a replacement or supplement to spoken communication
- The user generally selects something on a screen, which is then spoken aloud

Who benefits from AAC use?

- People who have physical problems with speaking
- People who have cognitive problems using language
- People who have both physical and cognitive disabilities

How does AAC work for people with speech disabilities?

- User types what they wish to communicate or selects from a list of words
- Speech may then be generated word-by-word, after a sentence has been typed, etc.
- Communication may occur in real time or user may store text for later retrieval (as Stephen Hawking often does)

How does AAC work for people with cognitive disabilities?

- User selects a picture or symbol, which may or may not be accompanied by text, that expresses the word or concept they wish to communicate
- Otherwise, it works similarly as for people with speech disabilities

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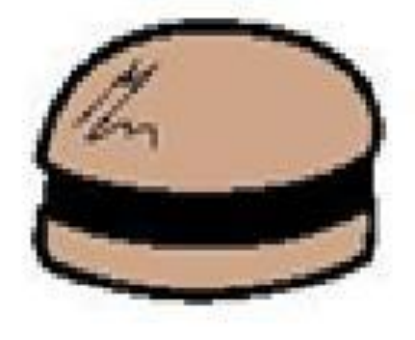
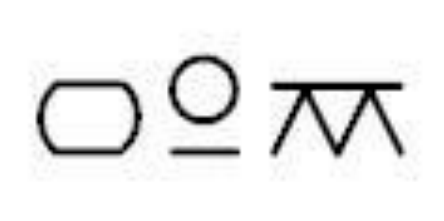
Three different ways to use graphics as part of AAC

Photo/Illustration



Boardmaker image



Bliss symbol

AAC Selection Considerations for Everyone

- What do they want/need to communicate?
- Who do they want/need to communicate with, in what natural language (English, Spanish, etc.)?
- How do they want/need to communicate? (face-to-face, over the telephone, to a group, etc.)
- Where do they want/need to communicate? (in school, in restaurants, onstage, etc.)

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AAC Selection Considerations for People with Speech Disabilities

- Will the user need/prefer to type or to select existing words?
- Will the user benefit from word prediction?

AAC Selection Considerations for People with Cognitive Disabilities

- Will the person best understand words, graphics, or a combination? What else will help comprehension (e.g., using pictures of family members)?
- How many options should be presented at a time?
- How should the options be organized?

The iPad Revolution in AAC

- Basic device is a price breakthrough for the level of sophistication provided; it is also easily portable and "normalized" (it looks like what everyone else is using)
- Relatively easy and intuitive to use
- Easy to develop and distribute apps, many of which can be customized by the end user

iPad, iPhone, iTouch

- Support for apps
- User ability to use larger/smaller device
- Need for telephony
- Portability
- Security

Free vs. Paid Apps

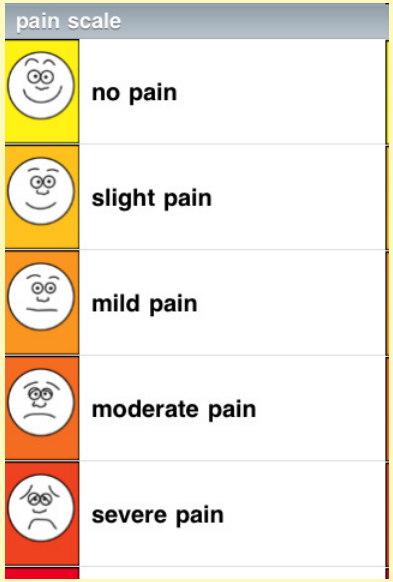
- Some apps have a basic free version that can be upgraded for a fee (more vocabulary, more voices, etc.)
- Many free apps are surprisingly powerful
- Worth downloading and trying some free apps first to see what does and doesn't work

Scenario 1: Myrtle

- 71 years old; recent stroke survivor
- Speech is definitely impacted
- Unclear whether cognition is impacted
- Clearly wishes to communicate about urgent needs (e.g., hunger, thirst, bathroom); long-term communication goals are unclear

Potential Solution: SmallTalk

- Series of free apps with a variety of vocabularies (the image below is from the Pain Scale app)



Potential Solution: SmallTalk (2)

- Some apps also have videos, which can help with speech therapy or with demonstrating new swallowing techniques
- http://www.aphasia.com/slp/product_smalltalk.aspx

Scenario 2: Juan Carlos

- 22 years old; about to leave rehab after a car accident where he acquired a head injury
- Wants to be able to communicate requests and also have simple conversations with friends
- Primary language is Spanish. Knew some English prior to accident, but is having great difficulty recalling it now.

Potential Solution: iComm

- Simple, easily customizable interface
- Audio can be recorded, so no language issues

Potential Solution: iComm (2)

- Free; versions with more screens are available for under $15
- http://www.miasapps.com/icomm.html

Scenario 3: Mai

- 17 years old; has cerebral palsy, which moderately affects her speech and coordination, but does not affect her cognition.
- Has rejected traditional communication devices as "uncool" and "too different."
- Wants something she can use in her college environment

Potential Solution: Verbally

- Free app that can be used to speak words or phrases
- Word prediction is included

Potential Solution: Verbally (2)

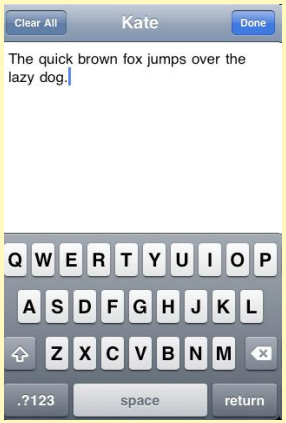
- Text can be spoken as it is typed/selected or when a "Speak" button is pressed.
- http://verballyapp.com/

Scenario 4: Donald

- 45 years old; high school physics professor. Vocal cords have been damaged by cancer.
- Wants to be able to store and retrieve lecture text, as well as communicate spontaneously.

Potential Solution: NeoPaul

- Free app that allows significant amounts of text to be stored and retrieved
- Available for English, Spanish, Korean, Mandarin Chinese, and Japanese.



Potential Solution: NeoPaul (2)

- Also available as NeoKate and NeoJulie.
- http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/neopaul/id334254353?mt=8

Scenario 5: Cheryl

- 60 years old; has early stage Alzheimer's
- Sometimes is able to talk, sometimes is not able to talk but can recognize words, sometimes can only recognize pictures
- Still open to trying new equipment. Wants to be able to communicate consistently with caregivers and local family members.

Potential Solution: ProLoquo2Go

- Extremely configurable; provides multiple communication categories
- Has modes for either selecting pictures or typing. Uses Boardmaker symbols, but other images can be added.

Potential Solutions: Proloquo2Go (2)

- Can be used on iPhone to make calls
- $190
- http://www.proloquo2go.com/

Scenario 6: Jonah

- 25 years old; has very low vision as well as autism
- Goal is to communicate simple needs, food preferences, etc.

Potential Solution: Alexicom AAC

- Has a scanning mode with optional auditory output
- User provides a series of switch presses to select desired item

Potential Solution: Alexicom AAC (2)

- Scanning hardware: Switch interface ($99; http://www.rjcooper.com/bluetooth-switch-interface/index.html) plus two switches
- Alexicom comes with four free boards; a subscription that allows boards to be created is $40/month (less with an annual subscription)

Lists of AAC software for iOS

- AppsforAAC matrix: http://appsforaac.net/applistus
- Spectronix sorted matrix: http://www.spectronicsinoz.com/article/iphoneipad-apps-for-aac

Also: many apps have how-to videos on YouTube

Summary

- A wide variety of AAC apps are available for iOS
- They can address the needs of people with speech disabilities, cognitive disabilities, or both
- Tune in for our next AAC webinar for more information

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Accessible Technology Coalition

- Website with database of articles on Accessible Technology (www.atcoalition.org)
- Online and In-Person Training
- Ask an Expert
- Funded by the California Emerging Technology Fund, ATC is a project of the Center for Accessible Technology (CforAT) in Berkeley, CA.

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ATC Mission & Goals

- To develop a consumer driven program that provides people with disabilities, and those that work with them, accurate answers to their technology questions, allowing them to identify appropriate solutions.
- To improve the quality of life for people with disabilities through information and training leading to successful adoption and use of accessible technology.
- ***"Putting the 'accessible' in Accessible Technology"***

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ATC Programs

- AT Article Database
- Ask the Expert
- AT Online Training
- Website with User Interface
- Broadband Information

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